

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food product in a manner effective for achieving at least a 3 log reduction in live bacteria on said surface without causing any substantial color change in said surface.

2. The process of claim 1 wherein said food product has an internal core temperature and wherein said step of heating is conducted in a manner such that no substantial increase in said internal core temperature occurs.

3. The process of claim 2 wherein said internal core temperature is not greater than 40°F.

4. The process of claim 1 wherein, in said step of heating, said surface is heated to a temperature of at least 160°F.

5. The process of claim 1 wherein, in said step of heating, said food product is continuously delivered through an oven.

6. The process of claim 5 wherein said oven is an infrared oven.

7. The process of claim 1 wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of heating.

1 *cat* 8. The process of claim 7 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of
2 meat, poultry, and fish products.

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4 9. The process of claim 1 further comprising the step of packaging said food product within less
5 than 10 minutes after said step of heating.

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7 10. A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the step of heating a surface of a food
8 product to a temperature of at least 160°F, said food product having an internal core temperature and
9 said step of heating being conducted in a manner such that no substantial increase in said core
10 temperature occurs.

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12 11. The process of claim 10 wherein said step of heating is conducted in a manner effective for
13 preventing any substantial change in color of said surface.

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15 12. The process of claim 10 wherein said core temperature is not greater than 40°F.

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17 13. The process of claim 10 wherein, in said step of heating, said food product is continuously
18 delivered through an oven.

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20 14. The process of claim 13 wherein said oven is an infrared oven.

- 1 *and* 15. The process of claim 10 wherein said food product has been cooked prior to said step of
2 heating.
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- 4 16. The process of claim 15 wherein said food product is selected from the group consisting of
5 meat, poultry, and fish products.
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- 7 17. The process of claim 10 further comprising the step of packaging said food product within
8 less than 10 minutes after said step of heating.
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- 10 18. A process for preventing food-borne illness comprising the steps of:
11 (a) continuously conveying a precooked food product through a continuous infrared
12 oven at an operating temperature of at least 500°F and
13 (b) heating a surface of said precooked food product in said infrared oven for a time
14 sufficient to bring said surface to a temperature of at least 160°F,
15 wherein said precooked food product is selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry,
16 and fish products.
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- 18 19. The process of claim 18 wherein said operating temperature is at least 700°F and said time
19 is less than two minutes.
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- 21 20. The process of claim 18 wherein said operating temperature is at least 750°F and said time
22 is less than one minute.

10 21. The process of claim 18 wherein, in step (b), said surface is heated to at least 180°F.

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3 22. The process of claim 18 further comprising the step of (c) continuously packaging said food
4 product within less than 10 minutes after step (b).

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